MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

9/11 Personal Privacy

Event: Interview of FBI Special Agent Tim Ervin

Type of event: Interview

Dates: October 17, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Michael Jacobson

Team Number: 1A

Location: FBI, Washington Field Office

Participants – Non-Commission: Assistant General Counsel Bob Sinton

Participants – Commission: Hyon Kim, Raj De, Michael Jacobson

The WFO interest in [redacted] and [redacted] originated out of a lead from an FBI Office in Ohio. Ervin thinks that it was the Akron Office. [redacted] was married to a woman whose family lived there. The Akron office was investigating her family, and during a surveillance spotted [redacted] vehicle. They sent this lead to WFO. The initial lead made him seem like a great target, but upon close examination it turned out that he was not. His connection to the hijackers was really weak.

There was one lead regarding [redacted] paying for a hotel room for his nephew in the Newark area on September 10, 2001. This was the same hotel in which the hijackers were staying that night. It turned out that his nephew did not actually stay in the hotel on September 10th. He actually was there on September 2nd or 3rd, Ervin believes, and he did not overlap with the hijackers.

This is one of the frustrating things about working CT investigations. In criminal cases only facts or witness statements go in the file. You then know that you can rely, to some extent, on the information in the file. There is no analysis or speculation put into criminal files. In CT, speculation and analysis is welcomed. It all goes in. He has talked to many criminal agents who are appalled by the things in ACS which aren't true in CT investigations. It's like a game of telephone. There are agents working CT who are desperate to break a big case. They put things together and into the files which are ridiculous fantasy.

Another problem is the coordination. After he'd been working the [redacted] investigation for a few months, he found out that an agent sitting next to him had also been tasked to work on the same investigation, and neither one of them knew about the other's involvement.

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Regarding the hijackers calls to the gas stations owned by [redacted] and [redacted] he doesn't think this is suspicious. [redacted] is a very wealthy man, who owns 11-12 gas stations. He's not that involved in day to day operations of the stations, and was not even sure who the managers were. He's very removed. He has no idea what the FBI has done to figure out who the hijackers called at the gas station. They did have a case agent for every lead, so there should be an agent out there who conducted this investigation. Every call the hijackers made generated a lead, he noted. To his knowledge, these particular gas stations are not places where there is significant extremist activity or where extremists tend to congregate.

[redacted] did not know Al-Rababah or Chehazeh, so his connections to [redacted] are so tangential. He can't remember exactly what the connection was. They've started feeling at the FBI that they are doing the "Kevin Bacon 6 degrees of separation" for investigations.

He doesn't recall about [redacted] connections to the apartment in Paterson. Newark would probably know more about that.

His overall assessment is that [redacted] is just focused on the money. He's very greedy, and that's the only thing he's concerned about.

[redacted] did own a gas station in Boston, and has some Syrian associates, but he doesn't remember anything else about it. He was more focused on [redacted] than on [redacted] SA [redacted] would know more about [redacted] than he does.

He recalls that they ruled out the link between [redacted] and Bayoumi. He can't remember the details, though.

Ervin was asked about the café owner with the ties to [redacted] and the hijackers. He said that the café owner in San Diego had called into the FBI after 9/11 to say that he had seen a few of the hijackers in his café.

Basically, the bottom line is that there is nothing suspicious that panned out with respect to [redacted] and the hijackers.

[redacted] family is friends from the mosque with [redacted] and his family. They knew each other for years. [redacted] and [redacted] definitely did have a joint transaction to purchase a condo. [redacted] son, Ali, went off to Saudi Arabia and became radicalized. He can't recall what [redacted] did for a living, and doesn't remember whether he has ties to the Saudi Government. He also does not recall other ties between [redacted] and any other Saudi diplomats.

[redacted] name kept popping up because there was information about him in the system. An example is the connection to [redacted] and his son.

He's handled a few of the leads for the numbers the hijackers called. They were just dead ends. [redacted] had another promising lead. He was the agent for the kid who sold the hijackers the fake Ids and told a sensationalistic story about them.

Historically, the worse agents worked CT at the FBI. After 9/11, they forced many agents to work CT who didn't want to. Before 9/11, the agents working CT were usually those who were lazy and didn't really care. The agents who've been transferred over hate it now. The problem is that the CIA has the whole ballgame. If you really want to work CT and make a difference, you have to join the CIA [redacted]

The Lackawanna 6 was a good case. The other prosecutions for terrorism are B.S. They would never have investigated the Virginia jihad group before 9/11.

The CIA is dramatically expanding its role and presence, both overseas and in the U.S. The FBI is trying to expand overseas as well. The whole ball game is overseas though. He doesn't think the FBI has any investigations in the US "worth a darn."